

Communication Matters

Volume 5, Issue 10 • July 2005

Cochlear Implant Booklets by SHHH

Self Help for Hard of Hearing People (SHHH) has produced two new educational booklets: *Cochlear Implants: When Hearing Aids Aren't Enough* and *Questions for Adults to Ask the Surgeon when Being Evaluated for Cochlear Implant*.

The booklets provide clear, straightforward discussion of the cochlear implant process, and helpful advice for those considering surgery.

Copies of these booklets can be ordered, **free of charge**:

Phone: 301-657-2248

Web: www.hearingloss.org

Best Practices

Guide and Checklist

The Division on Deaf and Hard of Hearing has developed a guide for agencies serving people who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or DeafBlind. Topics include office environment, programs and services, safety, advocacy, information and support, as well as other topics.

Download your copy now and see how your office measures up! Or see the copy at the end of this bulletin.

www.mcdc-dodhh.org/



Captioned Telephones Available!

Imagine a telephone that provides sound amplification and real time captioning of every word spoken. This type of phone, called CapTel, is currently available on a limited basis. CapTel users listen and speak as with any other phone. At the same time, the other person's words are captioned. This revolutionary telephone for people who are hard of hearing uses a relay system which is not yet universally available.

For Federal personnel (active or retired), veterans, or US Tribal members, the Federal Relay now offers CapTel Services in all 50 states. Free CapTel phones are available to eligible people with hearing loss. For more information about the Federal program see: www.captionedtelephone.com/availability/Federal.phtml

MSU Research Study: Seeking Adults with Moderate-to-Severe Hearing Loss

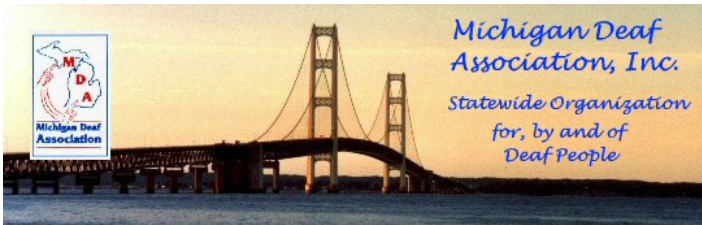
If you are an adult with a bilateral (both ears) hearing loss in the moderate to severe range, MSU needs you! A doctoral student is testing a computer program that measures hearing handicap using answers to 10 simple questions.

Ideal candidates are individuals with audiometric hearing losses between about 55-90 dB in both ears. For each participant, MSU will provide a free hearing evaluation, hearing aid analysis, and audiological recommendations. Two sessions totaling about 2-1/2 hours, conducted on the MSU campus, are required.

If you are interested contact Sara Shogren by phone at (517) 327-7993 or e-mail at: s_shogren@hotmail.com

Information or news related to Deaf or Hard of Hearing services may be forwarded to Julie Eckhardt at jewel@chartermi.net.

Views expressed in this bulletin are not necessarily the views of Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Growth-Rehabilitation Services. Communication Matters is available on the web at www.michigan.gov/mrs and on the E-Learn Deaf & Hard of Hearing Resource Center.



Best and the Brightest Emerging Technology

By Annette Leonard

WROCC at WOU Newsletter: July 14, 2005

Conference Highlights

By Chris Hunter

The 2005 Michigan Deaf Association (MDA) Conference will be a memorable event. The theme, “**MDA Leadership: Past, Present and Future**” will provide memories of the MDA beginnings in the 19th century, and how it has provided leadership for Deaf and Hard of Hearing citizens in Michigan for over 118 years and 49 conferences!

The conference is **September 28 – October 1, 2005** at the **Marriott Centerpoint in Pontiac**. Activities include workshops, Miss Deaf Michigan Pageant, entertainment with actress Phyllis Frelich and more!

The conference begins with the Board of Directors meeting and a general business meeting on September 28. The Opening Ceremonies, on Thursday, September 29, will include the introduction of fifteen Miss Deaf Michigan Pageant candidates and presentations by past MDA presidents.

Immediately after the opening ceremony is FEAR FACTOR, directed by Katie Breedlove and her team. The audience will observe the student teams from various school programs playing games to demonstrate intellectual, leadership, physical, communicative, cultural, spiritual, political, and creativity skills. Awards will go to the winners.

The President’s Reception will have multiple speakers and allows you to meet the pageant contestants. The workshops will continue on Friday, all day, except when there may be adult skit contests involving deaf and HH clubs (tentative). Dr. Bob Anthony, Supervisor of Program for Deaf and HH at Northview Public Schools (Grand Rapids) will be the luncheon speaker. He will talk about the past, present and future of deaf education.

The Miss Deaf Michigan Pageant will commence at 7:30 PM on Friday evening. The Pageant features fifteen beautiful and intellectual young ladies competing for the crown and a trip to Miss Deaf America in New Orleans, LA during the National Association of the Deaf Conference in 2006. The judges will have a tough time judging talent, evening gowns, and

Recently, I had the opportunity to attend both the NTID Instructional Technology Symposium (June 26 – 30) in Rochester and the SHHH National Convention (June 30 – July 3) in Washington, DC. Attending sessions at both conferences and wandering through the exhibit hall at SHHH, I made note of a few interesting products and emerging technologies. Please enjoy my “Best and the Brightest” picks from the two conferences.

ELI

Displayed at the Starkey booth, this new device (about the size of a Visa logo on a credit card and weighing only 5.2 grams) called ELI, is one of the most interesting and potentially useful devices I encountered. For hearing aid users ELI plugs into the DAI (direct audio input) boot of a behind-the-ear hearing aid or an adapted neck loop and receives Bluetooth audio transmissions from other Bluetooth enabled devices. Perhaps most significantly, with a Bluetooth-enabled digital cell phone, ELI can be used as a wireless, hands-free head set (there is a small microphone on the end of it) and have a conversations while wearing your hearing aid without having to use the telecoil. ELI boasts that the device “will solve virtually all of the problems that hearing aid wearers typically encounter with telephones, including acoustic feedback, insufficient volume, noise from other electrical sources and digital cell phone interference.” While facilitating cell phone for hard of hearing people is important, one can also use ELI to listen to music or audio books from a PDA, computer or other Bluetooth device.

Bluetooth allows for close-range, wireless audio transmission. Because the signal is digital, Bluetooth devices are not subject to signal degradation that can occur with FM or inductive transmission. The ELI unit comes with a charger for its rechargeable lithium-ion-polymer battery. For more information and to see pictures of the device, visit their web site www.elihearing.com/. At the SHHH Convention, the unit was being sold for \$299. If you are interested in purchasing an ELI unit, contact your local hearing instrument professional.

NOAA Weather Radio (NWR)

NOAA National Weather Service (NWS) warnings and watches have saved countless lives by notifying the public

More on the conference on page 3

More tech on page 3

of imminent dangers such as hurricanes, tornados, and earthquakes. However, individuals with hearing loss are not able to access the voice broadcast emergency warnings on the NWS, or Emergency Alert System (EAS). To address the needs of hard of hearing and deaf people, special radio receivers have been developed to provide visual and tactile alerting systems for receiving up-to-the-minute emergency warning broadcasts for national and local, weather and non-weather (All-Hazards) life threatening events.

The industry standard for these devices is certified by the Consumer Electronics Association under the name Public Alert®. These devices range in size, features and price. The least expensive of these devices start at around \$50. For more information, specifications and answers to frequently asked questions visit: www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr/special_need.htm.

SafeAwake

This safety device is being created to address the fact that beeping and flashing smoke detectors often do not awaken deaf and hard of hearing individuals if a fire alarm is tripped in the night. The SafeAwake, activated by the sound of a standard audible home smoke detector sends a signal to an intermittent bed shaker to alert a sleeping person to the emergency. The safe awake has a battery backup. There is a flashing light to supplement the bed shaker, and it can be integrated with an alarm clock for both scheduled and emergency waking.

Based on the results of a NIH sponsored study, strobe light smoke detectors are only 55% effective in awakening deaf and 35% effective in awakening the hard of hearing individuals. The intermittent bed shaker used in the SafeAwake awakened 100% of the subjects tested. Still in the research and development phase, SafeAwake is expected to be on the market in early 2006. The retail price will be about \$50. For more information, send an e-mail to info@safeawake.com.

Speak 'n Read

While I did not see this product or a demonstration of its capabilities, it was mentioned in sessions I attended at both the NTID Symposium and the SHHH Convention. The Speak 'n Read offers deaf and hard of hearing users the promise of real-time, automatic speech recognition in a portable format. The idea is that microphones, specifically selected for the setting (i.e.: lapel, shotgun, tripod, etc.) are worn or held by the user; as someone speaks her/his words are picked up by the microphone, processed with voice recognition software, run through a proprietary artificial intelligence program and then the speaker's words appear on the screen of a small hand held computer. WOW!

One of the product developers told me that they "have reduced

voice training down from 40 hours to about half an hour to a couple of hours depending on the voice. At this level we get about 80% accuracy. Then our artificial intelligence takes over and with use it learns and the accuracy goes up near 100%." He went on to remind me that "Even non deaf people occasionally miss words." The software and processing require a lot of power in a very small computer. At this point, the hand held computers used with the product are either the Sony Vaio U71, U50 or the OQO 01. The product retails for \$4500 to \$5500. For more information about the Speak 'n Read or to find local distributors, visit their web site: www.medbio.com/.

Please pass this along to others who might be interested. A web version of this newsletter will also be posted on our site: www.wou.edu/education/sped/wrocc/news_tech0605.htm

Annette Leonard, Project Coordinator
WROCC Outreach Site
Western Oregon University
www.wou.edu/wrocc

MDA Conference Continued!

interviews. You can view the contestants on www.mideaf.org/MissDeafMichigan.

The President of the National Association of the Deaf, Andy Lange, will give a leadership training workshop on Saturday morning. Saturday afternoon allows time for folks to visit the Deaf Celebration Day at Summit Place Mall. Following the Saturday evening banquet is entertainment by the famous Deaf actress, Phyllis Frelich. Ms. Frelich was the first Deaf person to receive the Tony Award for best actress in the play "Children of Lesser God."

For registration and information see the MDA web site:

www.mideaf.org

Silent Celebration

*September 10 and 11, 2005
Muskegon, MI*

For more information go to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Connections web:

www.dhhc.org